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The Industrial Training Resources Project is an attempt to establish a model for use of industrial training facilities in the vocational rehabilitation of mentally retarded persons. The present study was conducted to help assess the climate of employer receptivity and understanding of the project. The multiple objective included: (1) creating employer interest and participation, (2) training of supervisors who become involved, and (3) preparing retardates for assignment to employer programs. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire sent to 720 employers. The survey revealed employer receptivity to employment of retardates in both large and small companies, and emphasized the need for training of supervisors who are to work with retardates. Specific questions covered by the survey include: Would you anticipate difficulty with a union in your company in the hiring of mentally retarded employees? Would you expect any problems with your insurances if you hired mentally retarded employees? Are there any occupations in your company for which you think it practical to waive educational requirements for persons otherwise qualified to do the work? (CH)

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SURVEY OF

EMPLOYER EXPERIENCE AND OPINIONS

CONCERNING MENTALLY RETARDED PERSONS AS EMPLOYEES

Industrial Training Resources Project
Jewish Employment and Vocational Service
St. Louis, ~~Missouri~~
February 10, 1968

VT007353

EMPLOYER EXPERIENCE AND OPINIONS CONCERNING MENTALLY RETARDED PERSONS AS EMPLOYEES[1]

The Problem

The Industrial Training Resources (ITR) project is attempting to establish a blueprint for maximum use of industrial training facilities in the vocational rehabilitation of retardates. To accomplish this, we try to interest more capable employers in developing and conducting occupational training programs specifically geared to learning characteristics of retardates. This project should increase involvement of industrial concerns in an area of the special vocational education where formal schools are less effective.

More detail concerning the operation of this project has been discussed elsewhere (Bolanovich, 1967). The present study was conducted to help assess the climate of employer receptivity and understanding in which the project will operate.

In carrying out the ITR project we need to know the background of experiences, attitudes, and opinions from which employers will view our efforts: What do they know of the capabilities of retardates, and the problems of supervision and training? What has been the extent of their experiences with retardates and contact with work adjustment training given them by schools and rehabilitation agencies? How receptive are employers apt to be to involvement in rehabilitation? The answers to questions like these will give us guidance in: (1) creating employer interest and participation; (2) training of supervisors who become involved, and (3) preparing retardates for assignment to employer programs.

The most suitable technique for the purpose of this study, within our limited budget, seemed to be the mail survey.

Related Studies

There have been several previous studies of this general subject, using both mail survey and interview techniques (Cohen 1963, Hartlage 1965, Phelps 1965). These have been confined to local communities and have been quite limited in their findings. They dealt primarily with either: (1) relationships between characteristics of respondents and attitudes toward retardates, (2) the intensity of attitudes toward retardates and degree of understanding of retardation, or (3)

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the relative merits of different survey techniques. In our analysis, the findings of those studies indicated that: (1) the relationship between level of education and attitude is unclear because it varies from positive to negative in the studies (Cohen 1963, Hartlage 1965, Phelps 1965); (2) respondents from larger organizations had more favorable attitudes than those from smaller ones (Hartlage 1965, Phelps 1965); (3) some differences in favorableness of attitudes are possibly associated with type of industrial function (Hartlage 1965, Phelps 1965); (4) the relationship between contact with retarded employees and attitude was not significant (Cohen 1963); and (5) there are no apparent differences in results obtained from mail surveys and interview surveys (Hartlage 1965). Reports of these studies do not lead to clear conclusions on the nature of the attitudes held by employers, and none of the studies point up particular implications for employer education, supervisor-employer relations, or preparation of retardates for employment. Since our project is most interested in the supervisor-employee relationship and the economic soundness of retardate employment to management, we are concerned with the specific opinions and attitudes of employers toward retardates in these areas.

Method

The procedures in this survey were as follows:

Design of Questionnaire: A questionnaire was developed to include as many items as seemed practical to elicit employer response concerning his experiences with mentally retarded employees and his opinions and attitudes regarding their functioning. The questionnaire was a four page folder with instructions on the cover page, and 18 major questions on the other three pages (form attached). Counting sub-questions to these, there were a total of 65 items with 110 response categories. Of these, four items yielded descriptive information regarding the employer (size of company, etc.); 15 items called for factual information on his experience with retardates and related hiring practices (Does your company hire persons known to be mentally retarded? Do you require a written test for all jobs? etc.); and 46 items dealt with opinions or attitudes (Would you anticipate difficulties with insurance if you hired retardates? Do you expect to continue to hire retardates? etc.). All items were arranged for easy employer response by checking blanks. The questionnaire took approximately 5 minutes to complete.

In addition to the questionnaire, the mailing package included a cover letter explaining the project, a direction sheet clarifying the definition of a retardate and giving the set for responses; and a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Sampling Plan: One of the concerns of the survey was for the generality of interpretations. Since previous similar work

had been confined to single localities, we were uncertain about this. Therefore, we included two quite different samples. In the first, questionnaires were sent to all St. Louis employers of 100 or more employees, except governmental and social service agencies. Forms were mailed directly to company presidents or, in the case of absentee owners, to the local top manager. Instructions were that the recipient should complete the form or forward it to someone else in his organization who could speak for it. Presumably this sample would represent the total industrial management community in a specific large metropolitan area. There were 720 employers in this sample.

As a basis for comparison, the second sample was selected to be quite different in nature. It consisted of 400 members of the American Society for Training and Development. This is the national organization for training directors. This sample was to represent a more sophisticated personnel-minded group of people who would be more like those our project intended to deal with. These were generally larger companies, many with multiple locations, and most having formal personnel department and training sections. This group should represent a high degree of awareness of the special situation of retardate employment. The 400 members were chosen by taking every sixth person from the 1966 national ASTD directory. Aside from any bias inherent in this method, two other selective conditions were imposed on the sample: (1) when a member in the sample did not seem to serve in a major training position, or was in an organization already represented in the sample, the next qualifying member on the list was chosen; (2) governmental agency members and St. Louis and Philadelphia members were excluded (these are project experimental cities and are subject to separate surveys). Otherwise, we felt that this sample would be a good cross section of ASTD membership.

Data Collection: Both survey sample mailings were made during a one week period, and replies collected over a period of several months. No attempt was made to send out follow-up mailings to stimulate additional replies. Returned and usable questionnaires totalled 231 for the local (St. Louis) sample and 102 for the national (ASTD) sample. This was a return of 26% for the ASTD sample and 34% for the St. Louis sample of the delivered questionnaires (13 of the ASTD and 1 of the St. Louis mailings were returned undelivered). This percentage return compares with returns of 24% (Phelps 1965); 33% (Hartlage 1965); and 70%(Cohen 1963) in previous studies. The higher returns in some of the cited studies were probably due to the more restricted samples, greater follow-up effort, and more intimate relationships with employers involved. The extent of bias in results due to this limited return cannot be estimated, but there is reason to believe that the "no-returns" would have been biased in the unfavorable direction (see section on "Discussion"). Hartlage, however, demonstrated that

results with incomplete returns in a mail survey did not differ from those obtained by a 100% interview survey.

After one month had passed with no returns, data collection was ended and the questionnaire responses were punched on McBee Keysort cards for analysis.

Treatment of Data: The percentages of responses to each choice for each item were computed separately for the total of both samples (N=333), the ASTD sample only (N=102), and the St. Louis sample only (N=231). To check for differences in the ASTD and St. Louis samples, critical ratios of differences in percentage responses were found for each item choice.

Each sample was separated into groups based on degree and kind of reported experience with retardates as employees. These groupings were: (1) those having hired retardates, (2) those who did not hire but reported knowing of someone else who has hired them, (3) those who have neither experience or knowledge of other's experience, and (4) those who reported having hired retardates who failed to make the grade. Separate computations were made for each of these groups in order to compare attitude responses in relation to experience.

To study different patterns of response by employers with favorable attitudes toward retardates and those with more unfavorable attitudes, extreme groups were separated out by means of a sub-scale of extreme attitude responses. Twelve items were selected which would characterize the respondent as definitely favorable or unfavorable in his attitudes toward employment of retardates. These were each scored 0 or 1 (positive scores to favorable responses), so that the "Attitude Scale" would yield total scores ranging from 0 to 12. Distributions of respondents were obtained on this scale, and cut-off scores set to separate out the (approximately) highest 20% and lowest 20% of the St. Louis sample. These cut-off scores then identified "high" and "low" attitude groups for study. Within each of these extreme groups, responses were tabulated for each questionnaire item.

Results

St. Louis Local Versus ASTD National Samples

The tabulations showed considerable similarity in response patterns for the St. Louis and ASTD samples despite certain obvious differences in the characteristics of respondents. The results seemed to be that the ASTD sample showed greater sophistication (have personnel departments; more larger multiple-location organizations; and more awareness of the retardate situation) of respondents than the St. Louis sample. The training director's attitudes were more favorable on most items though differences were not significant. Their general pattern of attitudes and experience, however, was similar to

that of the St. Louis managerial group. Therefore, we concluded that most of the attitude and experience differences between these two samples were in the degree of favorableness. Consequently, in presenting results, we shall concentrate on reporting experiences and opinions characterizing the total ASTD - St. Louis sample and on interpreting differences between "high" and "low" extreme attitude groups. Differences between ASTD and St. Louis samples will be mentioned only where significant departures occur.

The "Attitude Scale"

Figure 1 shows the distributions of scores for the ASTD and St. Louis samples on the 12 item "Attitude Scale." The average on this scale was 6.60 for the total group, 6.74 for the ASTD sample and 6.30 for the St. Louis sample. This difference is not significant, though the ASTD sample is generally higher throughout the distribution.

When the "Attitude Scale" scores are computed separately for the four levels of experience with hiring retardates, a distinct relationship between attitude and experience is shown:

N	Experience Groupings	Attitude Score
76	Have employed retardates	7.58
31	Have knowledge of other's experience	6.89
215	No experience, no knowledge	6.09
11	Have employed retardates who failed	5.55
333	All groups	6.60

This indicates a trend of increasingly higher attitude scores with increasing experience with employment of retardates, except where such experience has resulted in failure of the retardate as an employee. Such failures seem to prejudice attitudes. This analysis would seem to show that giving employers first hand experience with successful retardates could be a good way of influencing their attitudes.

In order to separate extreme attitude groups for analysis of characteristics of favorable and unfavorable attitudes, scores of 0 through 4 were designated as "low" and 8 through 12 as "high". This left us with a combined (both ASTD and St. Louis data) "high" attitude group of 81 respondents and a combined "low" attitude group of 58. The "high" group contained 46% ASTD respondents and 54% St. Louis sample respondents; while the "low" group contained 19% ASTD and 81% St. Louis respondents.

In the succeeding analyses, response percentages for all

employers surveyed are shown first, followed by percentages[2] for the extreme "high" and "low" attitude scale sub-groups.

Characteristics of Employers

The following items help describe the nature of employers included in the survey:

1. Number of employees at reporting location:

	All	High	Low
Under 10	0	0	0
10 to 100	11	5	12
100 to 500	50	54	50
500 to 1000	14	10	12
Over 1000	23	31	21

Half of the respondents were from companies in the 100 to 500 category and about one-fourth had over 1000 employees. None of the differences between high and low attitude groups is significant. Therefore, size of company was not associated with attitude. However, a significantly greater proportion of ASTD respondents were in the "over 1000" category (58%) compared to the St. Louis sample (8%), while 18% of the ASTD sample and 65% of the St. Louis sample reported "100 to 500".

2. Company headquarters in respondents metropolitan area?

	All	High	Low
Yes	73	84	66
No	21	15	24

Only one-fifth to one-fourth of respondents were in outlying locations. There were no significant differences in this item by attitude groups or survey samples.

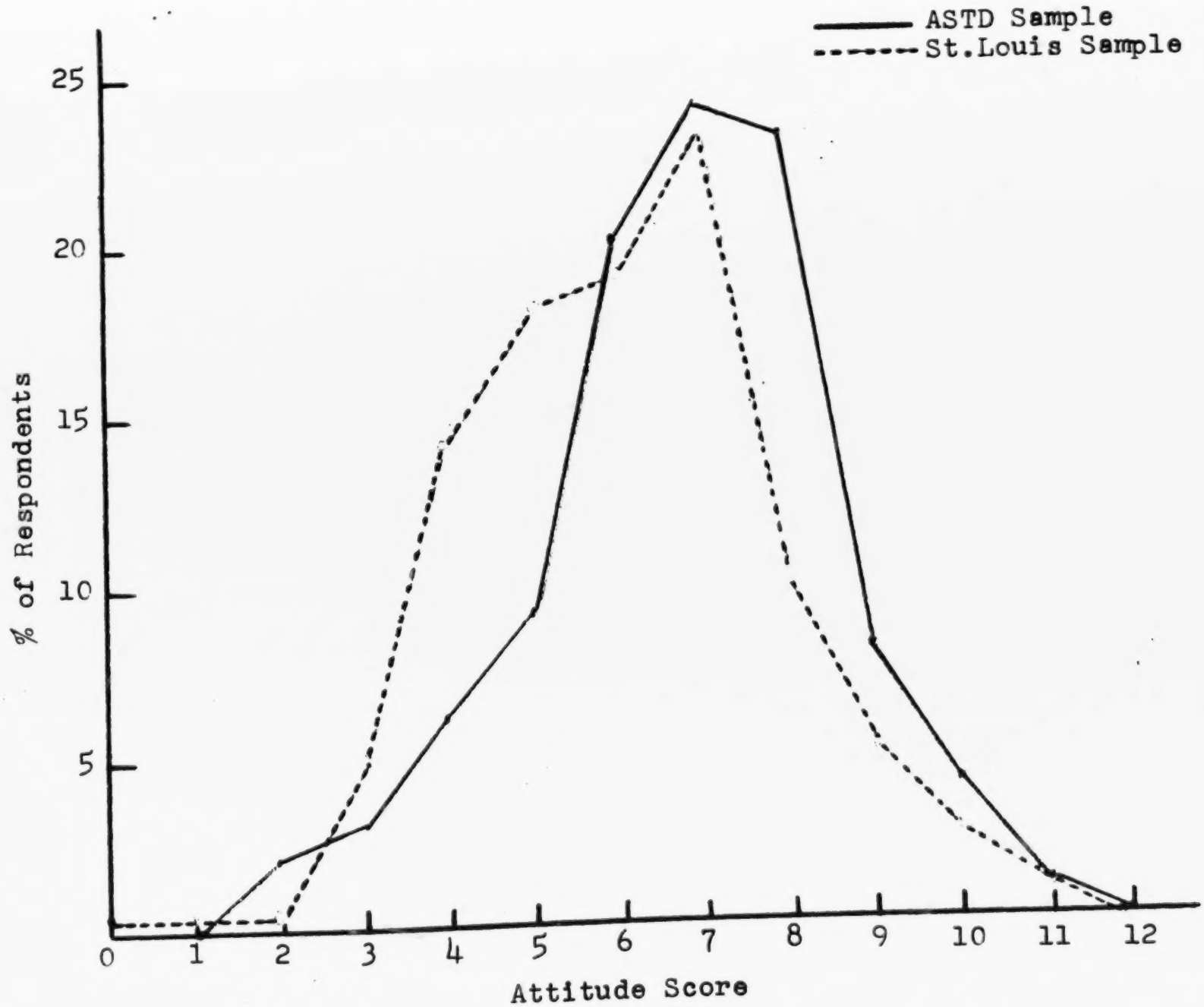
3. Does organization have a personnel department (or section, etc.)?

2/ Note that figures will be less than 100% for these groups in some items because of failures to respond or rounding errors. Also in items where multiple responses are elicited, figures will total over 100%.

Figure 1

DISTRIBUTION OF

ATTITUDE SCALE SCORES



	All	High	Low
Yes	80	85	76
No	14	12	15

Very few of the companies did not have a formal personnel function. There was no significant difference between attitude groups, though there was between survey samples - 94% of the ASTD sample and 73% of the St. Louis sample reported "Yes".

4. Characteristics of employer operation.

	All	High	Low
Retail Merchandising	8	9	7
Manufacturing	51	49	48
Warehousing	10	10	17
Personal Service	9	14	5
Transportation	5	5	9
Primarily Office or Technical Work	17	22	10
Multi-Location	23	28	24

Reporting organizations were predominantly in the manufacturing business, with a small distribution in other fields. Also about one quarter were multi-location organizations. There were no significant differences by attitude groups. There were two significant differences between ASTD and St. Louis samples. Twenty-five percent of ASTD respondents reported primarily clerical and technical work compared to 12% of the St. Louis sample, while 41% of the ASTD and 16% of the St. Louis samples reported multi-locations. Note that the categories in this item are not exclusive.

These items help to show the kinds of employers in the survey. They do not show differences to be related to attitude. This is contrary to previous studies in which size and type of business were found related to favorableness of attitude (Hartlage 1965, Phelps 1965).

Experiences with Employment of Retardates

Portions of the questionnaire dealt with the extent of experience with employment of retardates or related company practices. Items of this type follow.

1. "To your knowledge, does your company employ persons known to be mentally retarded?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	24	45	3
No	76	56	97

This item most clearly discriminated between high and low attitude groups - the difference being significant well beyond to 1% level. Whereas almost half of the high attitude group reported hiring retardates, only 3% of the low attitude group does so. In the total survey group, about one fourth of the employers hire retardates. Although we did not know of any previous studies which dealt with the extent of employment of retardates in industry, we were surprised to find it this high. Neither the St. Louis (21%) or national ASTD (29%) samples were significantly different in the degree of involvement with retardate employment.

The next three questions refer only to those who report having hired retardates (N=37 for high group and 5 for low group, and 92 for the total group). Since the low attitude group in these questions consisted of only 5 persons, not much inference can be drawn from the low group figures.

2. "What was the source?" (Check one or more.)

	All	High	Low
Usual employment office sources	55	62	60
State employment service	13	14	0
Special school or agency	35	49	20

Most of these employers hired retardates through usual sources - employment office walk-ins, replies to want ads, referrals by others. A considerably large percentage (49%) of the high attitude group had hired retardates through special schools or rehabilitation agencies. This is consistent with other findings of this survey that the high attitude group of employers above had more contact with organizations who train retardates.

There was also a significant difference between the numbers of ASTD (58%) and St. Louis (22%) sample respondents reporting hiring retardates through special schools or agencies. This apparently reflects the greater contact with such agencies by larger, more public relation minded companies.

3. (a) "Are your supervisors of retarded employees made aware of this handicap?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	84	92	60
No	10	5	20

(b) "Are other co-workers made aware of the mentally retarded employee's handicap?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	41	57	40
No	52	43	40

A large majority of those hiring retardates let their supervisors know of the handicap, and about half also made co-workers aware of this. Apparently these companies do feel the need to create a cooperative special working environment for the retardate.

Again, questions refer to the total group.

4. "Has your company ever been approached by someone regarding employment of mentally retarded applicant?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	32	37	21
No	64	63	71

Almost two-thirds of reporting companies do not recall being contacted by anyone in behalf of employment of retardates. In view of this, the 25% reporting employment of retardates seems remarkably high. It suggests that greater efforts by placement counselors might considerably extend the employment of retardates to other companies.

5. "Have you had any contact with other employers who have hired mentally retarded persons?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	25	33	12
No	73	62	85

This question discriminated significantly between high and low attitude employers, as well as between the ASTD and St. Louis samples. Greater amount of contact was

reported by higher attitude employers and by those in the ASTD sample. In the total group, only about one fourth report contact with other employers who have hired retardates.

6. "Have you had any contact with schools or rehabilitation agencies which train mentally retarded persons for employment?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	19	33	9
No	64	59	64

Only about one fifth of employers have had such contact with those giving pre-employment training for retardates. This is somewhat less than the 25% who reported contact with other employers of retardates. Here again there was a significantly greater percentage (33%) of high attitude employers reporting such contact, contrasted to a very small number (9%) of low attitude employers.

7. "Does your company set any of the following as requirements which it expects of all employees, regardless of occupation?" (Check all that apply.)

	All	High	Low
Ability to read and write	71	72	78
Ability to pass a written test	42	30	62
High school graduation	36	25	50
Ability to perform several jobs	33	27	47
Potential for promotion	12	22	45

This question, while not dealing directly with employment of retardates, has important implications. Obviously such hiring requirements would be obstacles to their employment.

The low attitude group uniformly reported greater use of hiring standards requiring higher mental capacity. All differences were significant except that for "ability to read and write", but this was a requirement of a large percentage of both high and low attitude groups.

This question seems to indicate a need for greater realism on the part of employers regarding employment standards. The existence of unrealistic standards on the part of employers for relatively unskilled occupations has been

pointed out by Diamond (1967) in recent Department of Labor studies.

The foregoing questions give background information on employment practices relating to retardates and on the relationship between attitudes and experience. Generally they show that more favorable attitudes accompany more involvement with employment of retardates and more contact with others who are so involved. A sizable proportion of reporting employers (25%) have hired retardates. There seems to be a tendency on the part of these to create a sympathetic working environment. These questions also show that many employers have hiring standards which are obstacles to retardate employment, and that the large majority of them are not aware of having been contacted by rehabilitation workers.

Opinions and Attitudes

The following questions deal with opinions of respondents regarding capabilities of retardates.

1. "Do you think mentally retarded employees present any of the following problems to a greater degree than your other present employees?" (Check which ones.)

	All	High	Low
Take more time to break in	67	75	60
Don't do enough different tasks	59	64	53
Take too much of supervisor's time	33	26	41
More likely to have accidents	29	22	45
Can't maintain expected quality	18	9	36
Can't keep up the work pace	15	11	19
Disrupt other workers	12	9	21
Do not follow instructions	12	9	19
Endanger relations with public or customers	12	4	26
Can't find their way around company	7	9	7
Don't stick to work	4	0	10
Have higher absence rate	3	1	10

Both high and low attitude employers see problems with retardates in about the same relative order. However, the high attitude group seems to be more realistic. A large majority of high attitude respondents see two major problems - time it takes to break retardates in and lack of flexibility in their work. While most low attitude employers also see these problems, a large percentage also see problems with supervisor time, accidents, and work quality. The only significant differences between high and low groups were in connection with problem of work quality, customer and public relations, and accidents. These differences may reflect a lack of understanding of the facts by the employer group, particularly in regard to accident proneness.

2. "Do you think that mentally retarded persons give employers any of the following advantages as employees?" (Check which ones)

	All	High	Low
Satisfied with monotonous jobs	65	78	43
Don't quit easily	39	61	17
Can stand unpleasant tasks	35	51	24
Try harder	34	57	14
Take more pride in work	33	56	14
Are seldom absent	30	57	10
Are dependable	30	54	9
Cause less trouble	17	46	3
Take instructions and orders easily	13	36	2
Have more physical stamina	6	10	2
Do more work	5	17	0
None checked	24	6	41

Here again both high and low attitude groups saw advantages in the same relative order. Respondents seemed to agree with those advantages most generally attributed to retardates by rehabilitation workers. However, a significantly greater percentage of the high group checked every advantage listed. Possibly the high group was a bit too optimistic and the low group a bit too pessimistic.

3. "Would mentally retarded persons be a good source of employees in any of the following types of occupations?"

	All	High	Low
General laborer	63	82	40
Unskilled factory work	57	77	24
Personal service(maid, janitor)	52	66	28
Porter	50	65	35
Handyman	32	46	19
Shipping and material handling	29	49	12
Clerical routine jobs	27	47	9
Semi-skilled labor	21	57	5
Retail clerk	2	6	0
Not a good source of any	5	4	19
None checked	10	1	26

The same pattern was followed as in the previous question. There were significant differences between high and low attitude groups on all items except retail clerk, where there was almost unanimous agreement that retardates were not a good source of employees. The respondents seemed to agree pretty much with experience of rehabilitation workers as to which job retardates could fill.

4. "To your knowledge, does training given by schools and rehabilitation agencies qualify some mentally retarded persons for competitive employment?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	51	68	28
No	37	11	31

A significantly higher percentage of high attitude employers answered "Yes" again showing greater awareness in this area. However, there were a large number in all groups who did not respond to this question, probably meaning they did not know or could not interpret the question.

5. "Is it economical for a company to hire and train mentally retarded workers in lower skilled occupations?"

	All	High	Low
Yes, generally	35	64	5
Yes, but only where there are labor shortages or turnover	17	25	3
No, generally	25	9	50
Definitely uneconomical	3	1	10

There was a general hesitancy to attribute an economic advantage to retardate employment, except by the high attitude group. The low group was significantly negative, and the total group on the fence. Thirty-one percent of the low group and 20% of the total did not reply.

The next questions deal with respondent's opinions concerning employment policies affecting retardates.

1. "Do you think your company would hire a person known to be mentally retarded if he were already trained for a job you had vacant?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	63	89	7
No	30	7	90

Only about two-thirds of employers felt that they would hire retardates, even though trained for a job which was vacant. The high attitude group, however, had a significantly higher proportion of "Yes" answers and the low attitude group almost unanimously would not hire retardates. This was one of the questions in the attitude scale on which high and low groups were determined. This helps account for some of the extreme difference between these groups on this item.

2. "Do you think your company has some jobs which mentally retarded persons could successfully fill?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	56	79	21
No	38	16	74

Slightly over half of employers thought retardates could be successful on some jobs. This is less than those (63%)

who thought they would hire retardates, but greater than those (25%) previously reported who actually did hire them. This question also significantly discriminated high and low attitude groups, though it was not part of the "attitude scale".

The next two items refer only to employers who did hire retardates (N=37 in high, 5 in low, and 92 in total group).

3. (a) "How have mentally retarded employees fared in their work in your company?"

	All	High	Low
Failed to make the grade	12	3	60
Not quite up to par	32	27	40
Comparable to others in same job	38	57	0
Have some advantages	1	27	0

As we would expect, almost half reported somewhat less than normal performance, though it is significant that 39% felt retardates performed at least as well as others. Only 12% of all companies hiring retardates reported failures. (The totals are over 100% for the high group because some checked more than one category of experience, and less than 100% in others because a few did not answer the question.)

(b) "Do you expect to continue to hire mentally retarded employees?"

	All	High	Low
Yes, for jobs they can do	67	76	0
Only if non-retardates are unavailable	18	19	0
No	10	3	100

A large majority expect to continue to hire retardates, even when non-retardates are abailable. However, none of five companies in the low group and 3% of the high group do not expect to continue hiring. These are the same companies which reported unsatisfactory experiences with retardates in the previous question.

On the whole, experience with retardates is reported as satisfactory and most organizations who have tried it will continue to do so.

The next question again refers to those who reported knowing other companies who hired retardates (N=27 in high, 7 in low, and 85 in total groups).

4. "What do you think the experience has been of other employers who have hired retardates?"

	All	High	Low
It worked well	41	60	14
Made no particular difference	21	37	0
Probably wouldn't do it again	9	0	57
They regretted it	1	0	14
Do not know	33	22	29

Employers as a whole see the experiences of other employers about the same as they did their own. Only a small minority observed unfavorable experience of others. The high attitude group saw experience of other employers as good, while the low attitude group saw it as bad. Differences between high and low groups were significant. There was also a significantly greater proportion in the ASTD sample who checked "it worked well" than in the St. Louis sample. This was probably due to greater knowledge of such experience by training directors.

The next questions again relate to the full samples.

5. "How would you feel about being approached by someone regarding employment of a mentally retarded applicant?"

	All	High	Low
Would like such contact	13	37	0
Would make no difference	56	56	33
Prefer not	20	5	40
No answer	13	2	28

Employers do not express a strong desire to be involved with hiring retardates. Although previous questions show a generally favorable attitude toward them, only a small proportion (13%) of all employers feel they would like to be contacted about jobs. Even the high attitude group took a relatively neutral position. However, there was a significant difference in response between high and low attitude groups.

6. "Do you feel that hiring mentally retarded employees would involve your company in too much extra time with outside agencies, red tape, etc.?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	18	27	43
No	27	35	7
No opinion	50	33	38

This question also seems to show reservation on the part of employers. A "yes" response on this was scored as an extreme response and included in our "attitude scale". Despite this, even the high attitude group showed a considerable number of "Yes'es". These responses lead one to believe that employers, though sympathetic to the vocational problem of retardates, may still feel that hiring does require extra effort on the part of the employer. Also, note that half of the employers did not feel they could express an opinion on this question.

7. "Would you anticipate difficulty with a union in your company in the hiring of mentally retarded employees?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	17	15	28
No	44	53	26
Uncertain	31	30	33

Because some employers raise the union question when contacted about hiring and training retardates, we included it in the survey. It is surprising to find that relatively few do anticipate union problems. A significantly greater number of high attitude employers answered "No", though there was no significant difference between high and low attitude employees in percentage anticipating difficulty. There were a large number who did not know what to expect in all groups.

8. "Would you expect any problems with your insurances if you hired any mentally retarded employees?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	13	9	29
No	33	49	10
Uncertain	49	42	48

This also related to a question sometimes raised by employers. Here, there was even a greater degree of uncertainty, showing perhaps a need for employer education on this subject. Of employers who answered, the low attitude group predominantly did anticipate problems, while high attitude employers did not.

The next two questions are interesting in light of the current civil service program and in light of the previously reported indication of unrealistic hiring standards of the employers.

9. "The U. S. Government designates some occupations in which Civil Service written examinations are not required of mentally retarded persons who are otherwise qualified. Do you think this practice is sound?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	52	69	21
No	7	1	17
No opinion	38	28	53

A large number of employers felt they could not express an opinion on this. Probably they are not sufficiently aware of the practice or do not understand it. However, of those who did answer, a very large majority felt that the practice was sound. Even in the low attitude group, a majority approved waiving of Civil Service examinations. This was a surprising show of understanding and support for the federal program.

10. "Are there any occupations in your company for which you think it practical to waive educational requirements for persons otherwise qualified to do the work?"

	All	High	Low
Yes	74	98	24
No	20	1	52
No answer	6	1	24

This question cannot be strictly interpreted to refer to the mentally retarded. However, it does relate to one of the obstacles to their employment. The attitudes shown on this question are encouraging. Three quarters of the employers felt that educational standards could be waived in their companies for some occupations. One quarter of the low attitude group shared this opinion, as did almost the entire high attitude group. Employers seem to be taking an enlightened view on hiring standards, even though

many still do have reservations on admission of retardates.

Discussion

The survey results given here may not be based on a truly random sample of employers. Probably they are affected by two main sources of bias: (1) The results are only for the minority of employers who voluntarily returned questionnaires, and (2) the ASTD national sample of training directors probably had greater exposure to this subject. Both of these sources would tend to bias the answers in the favorable direction. Even within the questionnaire replies we have tabulated, low attitude employers showed up as much more frequently as "no response" or "no opinion" on individual items. It would seem logical to expect, then, that the non-responsiveness is correlated negatively with attitudes. On the other hand, Hartlage (1965) found no differences in attitudes toward retardates between a 50% return mail sample and a 100% interview sample. Our staff feels, however, that our study results are biased favorably. The degree of this bias is unknown.

Since there was a considerable variation in attitude in our sample, it was possible to study differences between high and low attitude employers. Results of these comparisons would not be contaminated as much by the sampling biases previously cited.

Within the limits of sampling bias, the results seem to suggest the following:

1. A large majority of employers (at least three-fourths) do not have personal experience with employment of retardates or knowledge of other employer's experiences. In addition, most employers have not had contact with rehabilitation agencies serving retardates, or knowledge of the pre-employment training work they do.

2. On the other hand, the employers with most favorable attitude toward retardates differ from those with less favorable attitudes in that they: (a) have greater experience as employers of retardates, (b) know of others who have had such experience, and (c) have had more contact with rehabilitation work.

3. Attitudes toward retardates are more favorable among personnel workers in larger organizations than among a more general sampling of managers.

4. Employers with lower attitudes also tend to have more rigid standards of employment. However, a large proportion of employers see the desirability of waiving educational standards for those who can demonstrate ability in lower skilled occupations.

5. Employer's evaluation of relative strengths and weaknesses of retardates as employees correspond pretty much to generally stated professional opinion. Principal problems they see are that retardates require more supervision and that they lack versatility. The main advantages they see are that retardates are more resistant to monotonous or unpleasant assignments and are satisfied more easily in their work. They see retardates as being successful mainly in jobs as general laborers, porters, maids, janitors, and in generally unskilled occupations. They do not see retardates as succeeding in clerical, retail sales, or semi-skilled work.

6. Although employers appreciate the need for employment of retardates, and many feel that they have jobs retardates can fill, they are not eager to get involved in such employment. They do not express a strong desire for contact by rehabilitation workers, and are somewhat apprehensive about involvement with them.

7. Employers are realistic about the economic value to their companies of hiring retardates, and about their comparability with normal employees. Many see them as a good labor source only in a tight labor situation.

8. Employers are somewhat uncertain about insurance problems connected with hiring retardates.

Conclusions

The survey shows that there is a sizeable segment of employers who are receptive to employment of retardates. They exist in both large and small companies. It should be possible to find employers with sophisticated industrial training programs who are willing to devote their resources to establish good training programs for retardates.

We who desire to enlist employer involvement need to see that they are more exposed to actual situations in which retardates have worked. This will help increase the degree of receptivity to them. Particular attention should be given to education of employers in the capabilities of retardates when properly supervised. Also there is need to enlighten employers more on records retardates have made with respect to safety and on the fact that they do not affect insurance rates of employers.

The survey also points up the need for training of supervisors who are to work with retardates. When managements have had so little exposure, we cannot expect supervisors to understand the special needs of retardates.

Finally, this study has implications for pre-employment preparation needed by retardates. Since they will be placed

with employers, many of whom will have some of the doubts and reservations expressed, we should be guided in our evaluation and training to see that they really do not merit these.

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Jewish Employment & Vocational Service
St. Louis, Missouri
February 10, 1968

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MENTALLY RETARDED PERSONS AS EMPLOYEES

A Survey of Industry Practice and Opinion

The following pages contain questions about your company's experiences or opinions regarding mentally retarded persons as workers. The questions are phrased so they can be easily answered by check marks. Please make appropriate checks to give answers for your company to each question. Please be frank and factual, as your answers are needed to give direction to programs for occupational training of mentally retarded persons. The questionnaire is anonymous, and no attempt will be made to identify who gave the answers to any form.

As a guide in answering the questions, a <u>mentally</u> <u>retarded</u> person means one who is handicapped intellectually. He is retarded in ability to learn, especially in written or verbal situations. Such persons are generally <u>not</u> handicapped in physical ability or moral sense, and <u>should</u> <u>not</u> <u>be</u> <u>confused</u> with emotionally disturbed or mentally ill persons.

Thank you very much for your time and for the help you are giving in this study. When you have completed the form, please return it in the attached self-addressed envelope.

Return to:

Industrial Training Resources
8200 Exchange Way
St. Louis, Missouri 63144

This project is sponsored by the U. S. Vocational Rehabilitation Administration and the Jewish Employment and Vocational Service.

NOTE: Please answer all questions. However, if you have not employed any mentally retarded persons, please answer all except #17.

1. To your knowledge, does your company employ persons known to be mentally retarded? YES_____NO_____

2. Do you think your company would hire a person known to be mentally retarded, if he were already trained for a job you had vacant? YES_____NO_____

3. Have you had contact with other employers who have hired mentally retarded employees? YES_____NO_____

   If yes, what do you think their experience has been:

   a. It worked well _____
   b. It made no particular difference _____
   c. They probably wouldn't do it again _____
   d. They regretted it _____
   e. Do not know_____

4. Do you think your company has some jobs which mentally retarded persons could successfully fill? YES_____NO _____

5. Has your company ever been approached by someone regarding employment of a mentally retarded applicant? YES _____NO _____

   How would you feel about being so approached?

   a. Prefer not _____
   b. Would make no difference _____
   c. Would like such contact _____

6. Do you think mentally retarded employees present any of the following problems to a greater degree than your other present employees? (Check which ones)

   a. Take more time to break in _____
   b. Don't stick to work _____
   c. Do not follow instructions_____
   d. Disrupt other workers _____
   e. Take too much of supervisor's time_____
   f. Can't do enough different assignments_____
   g. Can't maintain expected work quality_____
   h. Endanger relations with customers or public_____
   i. Can't find their way around the company_____
   j. Are more likely to have accidents_____
   k. Can't keep up the work pace _____
   l. Have a higher absence rate_____

7. Do you think that mentally retarded persons give employers any of the following advantages as employees? (Check which ones)

   a. Take instructions and orders easily_____
   b. Take more pride in doing good work _____

c. Have more physical stamina _____

d. Can stand unpleasant assignments _____

e. Cause less trouble _____

f. Are seldom absent _____

g. Don't quit easily _____

h. Do more work _____

i. Try harder _____

j. Are satisfied with monotonous jobs _____

k. Are dependable _____

8. To your knowledge, does training given by schools and vocational rehabilitation agencies qualify some mentally retarded persons for competitive employment? YES _____ NO _____
Have you had any contact with any of such training? YES _____ NO _____

9. Do you feel that hiring mentally retarded employees would involve your company in too much extra time with outside agencies, red tape, etc.? YES _____ NO _____ NO OPINION _____

10. Does your company set any of the following as requirements which it expects of all employees, regardless of occupation? (Check which ones, if any)

a. High school graduation _____

b. Ability to read and write _____

c. Potential for promotion to a higher level job _____

d. Ability to perform several jobs _____

e. Ability to pass some written test _____

11. The U. S. Government designates some occupations in which Civil Service written examinations are not required of mentally retarded persons who are otherwise qualified? Do you think this practice is sound? YES _____ NO _____ NO OPINION _____

12. Are there any occupations in your company for which you think it practical to waive educational requirements for persons otherwise qualified to do the work? YES _____ NO _____

13. In your opinion, would mentally retarded persons be a good source of employees in any of the following types of occupation? (Check which, if any)

a. General laborer _____

b. Personal service (maid, janitor, etc.) _____

c. Retail clerk _____

d. Handyman _____

e. Unskilled factory work _____

f. Shipping and material handling _____

g. Semi-skilled labor _____

h. Clerical routine jobs (file clerk, messenger, etc.) _____

i. Porter _____

j. Not really a good source in any _____

14. Is it economical to a company to hire and train mentally retarded workers in lower skilled occupations such as listed above?

a. Yes, generally ____

b. Yes, but only where there are labor shortages or high turnover ____

c. No, generally ____

d. Definitely uneconomical to do so ____

15. Would you anticipate difficulty with a union in your company in the hiring of mentally retarded employees? YES ____ NO ____ UNCERTAIN____

16. Would you expect any problems with your insurances if you hired any mentally retarded employees? YES ____ NO ____ UNCERTAIN ____

17. If your company has hired mentally retarded employees, please answer the following:

a. What was the source?(Check one or more)

1. Usual employment sources(employment office walk-ins, want-ads. etc.) ____
2. State Employment Service ____
3. Special School or Rehabilitation Agency ____

b. Are your supervisors of mentally retarded employees made aware of this handicap?
YES ____ NO ____

c. Are other co-workers made aware of the mentally retarded employee's handicap?
YES ____ NO ____

d. How have mentally retarded employees fared in their work in your company?
Failed to make the grade ____
Not quite up to par ____
Comparable to others on same job ____
Have some advantages to you over other employees ____

e. Do you expect to continue to hire mentally retarded employees?
Yes, if openings occur in jobs they can do ____
Only if non-retarded applicants are not available ____
No ____

18. Please give information regarding the nature of your company by checking the following items:

a. Number of your employees at this location

Under 10 ____ 100 to 500 ____ Over 1000 ____
10 to 100 ____ 500 to 1000 ____

b. Company headquarters in your metropolitan area: YES ____ NO ____

c. Have personnel department (or section, etc.) YES ____ NO ____

d. General nature of your company (check all that apply):

Retail merchandising ____ Primarily office or technical work ____
Manufacturing ____ City or state government ____
Warehousing ____ Personal service ____
Privately owned ____ Transportation ____
Non-profit ____ Multi-location ____

END

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